

March 28, 1977

by London (OSA 13114; six sides). The forces involved are the National Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Opera Chorus, conducted by Peter Maag, with Montserrat Caballé, Sherrill Milnes, Bonaldo Giaiotti, Luciano Pavarotti, Richard Van Allan, Anna Reynolds, and others, and they all give superb performances. "Luisa Miller" is a hearty, melodious opera, but its plot, based on Schiller's "Kabale und Liebe," is slightly ineffective.

FINALLY, a new recording of Massenet's "Thaïs" presents Beverly Sills in the title role, Sherrill Milnes and Nicolai Gedda in the other principal parts, the New Philharmonia Orchestra, and the John Alldis Choir, Lorin Maazel conducting (Angel SCLX-3832; six sides). This recording invites comparison with another recent "Thaïs," in which Anna Moffo sings the leading role (RCA ARL3-0842; six sides). Those who would sacrifice everything to beautiful singing tone will prefer the Moffo version, but Miss Sills is one of our greatest singing actresses, and her command of the dramatic inflections of the voice makes her "Thaïs" the better one, in my opinion. She is highly expressive in this recording, and Milnes is superb. Just one caveat: Mr. Maazel should stick to conducting. His performance of the famous violin solo the "Méditation," which he has undertaken in addition to his job as maestro, has a patch of poor intonation.

—WINTHROP SARGEANT

THE BLIND GIRL

When I was ten God sent two arrows, meant for my eyes. Two arrows, two capsules of snow that shattered, so the bandage froze to my face. When they took it off I was blind. Nurse, how strange the darkness is, not black at all but the passive color of absence, as though one afternoon an image came—of autumn, of a garden where all color had converged to fade—and faded and was not replaced. I listened: I heard voices, I heard my own voice rising from the still transparent body of an angel as calmly as the wind lifts the edges of the curtains, letting in the measured light.

—LOUISE GLÜCK

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